

CIL'S MISSION

Based on principles of democracy and social justice, CIL seeks to promote peace through international dialogue.

The center was founded in 1985 by people from the Philippines, the USA and Germany.



CIL/USA dialogue
A CIL Newsletter

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Reflections on “Security” Reveal Fear and Hope

Since the summertime subway bombings in London, New Yorkers have submitted to (or protested against) random inspection of their personal belongings in our subways. A columnist in a New York daily newspaper has suggested that the U.S. use Israel as a model and build a high wall along our borders. He also recommended that we carry national ID cards and require immigrants to learn English while attending patriotic immersion classes.

In other parts of the country, cities have hired Israeli consultants for advice on how to foil suicide bombers. The new U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security has a huge budget. Would such measures bring real security?

In this atmosphere, CIL's international dialogue “Security: How Can We All Have It?” seems especially timely and instructive. What have we learned about the topic of security so far? Recently we reviewed the last six month's correspondence on our internet forum to find out.

At the beginning of the year we asked current participants (who come from the U.S., the Philippines and Africa) how conflicts were addressed in their various cultures. Then in March we asked about the obstacles to security in their everyday lives. Responses from the Philippines were striking.

Dang Buenaventura, from Manila, wrote about a bomb scare there. “The threat of the bombing especially in places where people frequently visit ...is an obstacle we in the city have to deal with,” she wrote. “Life, especially living alone is like a risk everyday.... Everything was different in the province where I grew up. There you knew everybody. When you commute you knew everybody at the bus...at church...at the market.”

Dang's comments about conflict in the same letter were thought-provoking. She described a recent incident in a Philippine prison in which the prisoners took hostages when they despaired of getting relief from their harsh and oppressive living conditions. When authorities stormed the prison to release the hostages, two prison guards and 30 prisoners perished.

She concludes: “The problem arises when the small conflict, like a small wound, goes untreated, and grows until it is so big that it becomes more difficult to resolve. When there are unresolved conflicts our security will be threatened....I think that negotiation takes time and patience if you want to spare lives....”

Ed Gerlock, an American who has lived in the Philippines for many

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CIL Wins Grant to Conduct Youth Forums

The William T Grant Foundation has awarded CIL's Crossing Boundaries program for youth a \$4,000 grant to hold three forums in New York City. The project aims to empower youth by engaging them in a process of creating their own agendas for the forums and then communicating their concerns to a broader public.

The planning group of youth and adults, already selected, will meet monthly to develop agendas. Members of this group will interview local youth to identify their foremost concerns.

Youth from All Saints parish in Harlem and from the Incarcerated Mothers program's teen program will form the core of the project and then invite other youth from New York City to participate.

The first forum will be held late this year and there will be another in the spring of 2006. A third will be held in early summer with elders from both groups. Thus these youth will engage in conversations about their concerns with their families, teachers, neighbors and local leaders.

Rights of the Child Curriculum Launched

This year CIL's Crossing Boundaries program introduced a six-lesson curriculum on children's rights to young people from four countries. The lessons, presented through one of CIL's internet forums, lead the youth to a better understanding of the rights of children and to more involvement in the political process in their communities and countries.

Youth groups participated in New York, St. Louis and Los Angeles in the U.S.; Manila and Olongapo in the Philippines; in Cape Coast, Ghana and Garki Abuja, Nigeria. Facilitators in the groups presented the lessons to the youth and then communicated the results on the internet forum.

Coming Up

September 20 "How are the Kids?"

No Child Left Behind: Simplistic politics or moral imperative? Join the Living Room Dialogue with Kathleen Kanet
215 W. 78th St. #4B. c/o Fay
6:30 PM Please bring a snack to share.
Call 212-426-5818 for more information.

October 26 Recognition Night. Please see p. 4 for details

The curriculum, which is highly interactive and aims to be as much fun as possible, starts out by asking the youth to consider who they are as individuals and to affirm themselves.

"We believe that you have to feel good about yourself in order to love someone else," said Sr. Kathleen Kanet, developer of the curriculum along with staff-member Samara Shapiro. The lessons explore connections with other people, starting with family and then move on to considering the idea that anyone can work for change. "We want to convey the idea that everybody can be a hero. Somebody who doesn't like what's going on can stand up for what they believe and take risks. Change is a theme throughout this curriculum," Sr. Kathleen said.

The final lessons, reflect on the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child and ask the youth to consider what it means to have rights.

With grants of \$8,500 from the Conrad N. Hilton Sisters Fund and other grants from the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the Marianist Sharing Fund, the Crossing Boundaries program has grown in the past year.

Future face-to-face meetings for some of the youth leaders are being planned.

The Center of international Learning is a 501(c)3 organization and depends on individual contributions. Any contribution you can make in cash, stock, or a bequest will help to further our work. The address and phone number are on the cover of this newsletter. Thank you.

Security

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years, wrote: "I have tried to develop a theory of 'loving conflict.'....People who oppress other people are in 'worse shape' than those being oppressed.... Because we care about their human development, we have to come into conflict with them.... Gandhi and Martin Luther King taught us something about this...."

"The obstacles to my own security are related to the above...greedy landlords, corrupt officials, and people motivated by the triple curse of power, prestige and money...and when people driven to desperation are willing to drop the loving part of conflict... we're in real trouble."

From New York, Negash Abdurahman, an immigrant to the U.S. from Ethiopia, contributed the observation: "Denying other people their security, cornering them and acting as if they are less than, will negate our own security. Anyone cornered is bound to lash out. This creates a cycle of insecurity."

Creating Security

Some ideas about creating security have also emerged in our internet dialogue. For example, Jason, a Swiss student who was volunteering at Preda, a program for street children in the Philippines, found hope there. Describing himself as a "spoiled kid" "whose biggest problem was deciding among the many opportunities" he had, Jason wrote with passion about the effects of poverty he saw.

He wrote: "What is poverty?... It is not just about starving bellies. It is a lifetime struggle against obstacles. The poor are the most defenseless element of society. Whatever the crisis is, the poor are the first to suffer it. They have no money, no insurance, no medicine, not even a proper roof. The slum is the incarnation of the whole wickedness of mankind...."

Nevertheless, he continued, "Working in Preda shows me that changes are possible. There are so many intelligent and dedicated people working hard for solutions, and more and more they unite.... And

of course I see the progress of individuals, of the children living in our center. It is so satisfying to see how a sickly and anxious child becomes a humorous and activist companion within weeks! Many of them did not know how to write and count before coming here. Many of them did not experience acceptance and appreciation in their lives before, or real joy, trust, structure, safety and all these core values in human life. Now, they can grow."

Building Trust

Ed provided some thoughts on what we can do to move toward a more peaceful and secure world when he wrote: "Some people seem to think it [security] is strength – gotta show you're strong, 'the best defense is a good offence,' but security is built not so much on physical or armed strength but on mutual respect—a kind of strength in itself. In our case, it means going door to door and spending months talking to people until we are accepted and can get everyone to sit down together and talk about what they would like to do together...."

Two contributions from our African participants also provided insights about creating security.

Emmanuel Ntlima from Zambia wrote: "When we read the bible, we find that God Himself used war to correct, teach and punish certain situations. But then in our world today people fight for nothing other than selfish reasons. Dialogue becomes the best tool to sort out differences...."

And Ndaipaneyi Mukwena, a Zimbabwean currently living in South Africa, was philosophical: "People can only feel safe or have security if they have spiritual security. When life is well invested in/trusted in the Creator, God, one is able to then deal with the other forms of security which are mainly physical... I want to believe that all other forms of security are not foolproof but spiritual security has and bears fruits...."

CIL's internet dialogue on security will continue in the coming year. New participants are welcome: To join, go to www.cil-usa.org, click on Forums, and register.



Dang Buenaventura

Reaching Out: A Visit to a Mosque

CIL friend and supporter Parker Stephenson sent us an inspiring e-mail following Peggy Ray's Living Room Dialogue about her trip to Israel and Palestine. Here are some excerpts:

"I was thinking as I walked a block north to 96th to take a crosstown bus, how interesting and fortuitous it was that we were discussing the Israeli-Palestinian issues with the Islamic Cultural Center a block away. I had been meaning to contact the Center for research on a project dealing with young Muslim Arabs, and here it was in front of me. After a moment's hesitation, I stopped by the Center to see if it was open and to ask if they admit non-Muslims.

"I met a man who had converted from Christianity who was consoling a sad young woman who had been brought to tears by his kind words at the door. He explained to me that it was the responsibility of all Muslims to reach out to those in need and try to improve the troubled world we live in. I told him I thought it was all of our responsibility, regardless of religion. I asked if I was allowed in, to which he responded that I had touched him deeply by asking.

"It ended up that it was almost time for the evening prayer and since I was interested in visiting, the young woman invited me to join her (after spotting me the money to buy the necessary head scarf).

"I'm afraid I wasn't very good [at the prayers] as the thoughts in my head were flying around. How kind Ozgur has been to me, taking my hand, telling me I look beautiful in my head scarf, telling me how nice I am, smiling at me, laughing, but still she is obviously a Muslim who takes her religion seriously. When I had first asked Ali if I, as a Christian, was allowed into the Mosque I said to him and Ozgur that my church welcomes everyone (they had asked which one and where it was). But then I thought to myself, as welcoming as MAPC is, would my congregation stare at her head scarf and Ali's cap and wonder what they were doing among us Christians?

"Would they be welcomed, should I call and speak to the minister in advance and 'warn' him of my plans. Would I be discovered here in this room as an imposter? Were any of my movements improper, offensive? Were my toes supposed to be touching the ground while prostrating?

"I rode back on the bus and the subway with Ozgur. We exchanged information and I look forward to having lunch and talking and learning more from my new friend.

"I'm sorry--this ended up being a much longer e-mail than planned and there's more to tell--but the point is that communication and the will to learn and understand the 'other' does help and is welcome.

"Peace and Love, Parker"

Israel/Palestine

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She brought maps showing how Israel's construction of its separation wall cuts deeply into the West Bank, separating Palestinian farmers from their lands and family members from one another. The map also revealed that the construction of Israeli settlements and Jewish-only roads divides the West Bank into tiny enclaves making a viable Palestinian state impossible until they are dismantled.

Because she had so much to tell, participants in the evening suggested that she come back another night and talk about signs of hope. This took place on Thursday, Sept. 8. Notes from both events can be found on the web site — www.cil-usa.org.

CIL's RECOGNITION NIGHT 2005

Honoring All Saints Parish

**Wednesday, October 26, 2005
6-9 pm**

**The Marymount School
1026 5th Avenue**

**Wonderful reception, live music,
good food and our traditional
auction.**

Requested donation \$75.

**Make your reservation with
CIL, 240 E. 93rd St. #14 B, NY,
NY 10028**

Travelers Report on Journeys to Haiti, Mexico, Sweden and Israel/Palestine

Recent Living Room Dialogues have featured reports from Haiti, Mexico, Sweden and Israel/Palestine. For detailed notes, check the Recent Events box at our web site www.cil-usa.org

Haiti. In February, Jeff Hermanski, a student at Marymount College, showed slides from his third trip to the village of Dessables in Haiti. Jeff participates in a program called The Haiti Plunge which sends high school students there for two or three weeks of volunteer activity. Their projects have included reforestation; capping a spring; building a school, a bakery, and a church; teaching English, and raising and selling pigs.

The operating philosophy of the program is that person-to-person interaction can change the world. Students raise money for their trips in their own locale and return again and again to the same village.

Mexico. In March, Mona Bricke, a German Peace Brigades worker who has just returned from Mexico, and Michael Joseph, Co-Director of Peace Brigades USA, introduced the work of Peace Brigades in Mexico and internationally.

The goal of Peace Brigades is to place international observers in conflict areas where the lives of human rights workers are threatened as a result of their work. Having witnesses from other countries accompany human rights activists wherever they go appears to offer them a degree of protection. Peace Brigades has no political agenda, which has made its volunteers acceptable to the governments of the countries where they work. Its three core values are non-violence both for Peace Brigades and anyone it accompanies, non-partisanship, and non-interference in the decisions of any of the groups being supported.

Sweden. At CIL's first intergenerational Living Room Dialogue, twenty guests were very pleased to meet Idalmin Santana, age 14, and to hear her report on a trip to Sweden in April. The daughter of an incarcerated mother, Idalmin was invited to Sweden last year as a representative of

children with experiences like hers. This year she was selected to serve on an international jury that awarded The World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child..



Idalmin Santiago

Laura Fernandez, director of the Incarcerated Mothers Program in New York, accompanied Idalmin to Sweden and supported her in her Living Room Dialogue presentation about their trip. Idalmin spoke about her experience as one of 15 jurors sitting at a big table debating which of three candidates for the World's Children's Prize should be chosen. Each of the children was from a different country and each represented a different issue, for instance, slave labor, child abuse, sex trafficking, and HIV/AIDS.

Israel/Palestine. Peggy Ray recently returned in June from a trip to Israel and Palestine as a part of a Fellowship of Reconciliation "Interfaith Peace-Builders" delegation. She was one of 27 delegates from many parts of the U.S. who made the trip.

FOR sends several delegations a year to the region to support human rights and peace activists and to learn about this confusing conflict firsthand. Peggy was very moved by the hardships Palestinians experience under the Israeli occupation and impressed by the work of both Palestinian and Israeli human rights and peace activists.

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CIL planners meet for strategy session (bottom l to r): Negash
Abdurahman, Lou Martarano, Kathleen Kanet, Helen Corby,
Lillian Wall, Virginia Dorgan.
(Top l to r): Peggy Ray, Laura Fernandez, Dorothy McWhite,
and Larry Jones.

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